

THE UNIVERSITY REVIEW

A LITERARY MONTHLY



"Dear Imperative"

By Wayne Kunert

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From here to there

BY MICHAEL LACY

There's a bright light that opens the doors 2 eternity...
 Turn on a flashlight and meet me there.
 It's a wonderful place, but with it comes a strange exotic feeling.
 Here, I, am an animated angel...
 A sparkle with a tail of silver dust and a golden attitude,
 there's nothing finer than a colorful star, leading the way, searching 4 reality.
 But perhaps more beautiful than 1 glowing angel...
 2 can be more creative.
 A journey through darkness is happening at about the same time
 as the first time the sun and moon cross each other's path...
 2 angels kiss with a passion that lights a thousand worlds,
 and the bright light dies.
 Out of the blue, desecration and screams in the emptiness
 transform angels into bubblegum drops
 and the downward fall continues.
 A swift wind leads the way 2 a land of emotion through a rainbow,
 a rainbow of smiles, happiness, contentment and burgundy kittens.
 On the other side resides a fantastic fleet of flying glass dolphins,
 they catch the gumdrops and begin to chew.
 A bubble is blown and it pops... From it emerges 2 satin butterflies,
 can you guess their colors?
 From day to night, butterflies 2 doves, doves 2 Adam and Eve
 alone on a deserted pond.
 In the middle of nowhere, with nothing to do,
 they make love 4 the very first time.
 Their screams of passion ignite an angry God!
 The flames from his tears burn 2 lovers 2 ashes.
 But from the ashes arose 2 people more beautiful than ever.
 From 2 lovers 2 four and so on (U tell 2 friends)
 a civilization has begun...
 Production the main high.
 As if it didn't exist, change invades and our civilization begins 2 crumble,
 our wisdom helps no one but us.
 A world is gone.
 So any way you look at it, whatever U believe,
 It will always be From Here to There.

Editor's note:

- Russ Albright is a pharmacist at the CSUS Health Center.
- Shannon Bennett is a forensic science major.
- Russell Buettner is a former *Hornet* writer and is now a reporter for the *Ledger Dispatch*.
- Larry Cardenas is a senior majoring in social science and was a Navy SEAL for three years.
- Michael Fitzgerald is an associate professor of journalism and an ardent fan of civil rights.
- Carol Fucillo is a senior majoring in journalism.
- Michael Lacy is a senior majoring in music.
- Kent W. Leslie is a journalism major and *The Hornet* graphics coordinator.
- Steven W. Lockett is a senior majoring in liberal studies.
- Jolie C. Lucas is a graduate student studying social work.

- L. Nguyen is a graduate student studying math and economics; he has a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering.
- Suzanne Roman is a freshman majoring in pre-business. She was born in India.
- Diane Roach is a junior majoring in music.
- Jeff D. West is a senior majoring in English.

We sincerely regret the omission of background information on some of our contributors.

A special thanks goes to Michael Cosper, Wayne Kunert and Darko Lausevic for their continuing support of *The University Review*.

And, finally, I cannot express how much I appreciate the help of Bob Chow, without whom there would be no *University Review*. Thanks Bob.

Sincerely,
 David E. Brumfield

God, do you hear me crying?

BY DIANE ROACH

I have an ache buried deep in my heart,
 Where none can see.
 The ache belongs to an unhealed wound
 That drips blood and ichor and pus.
 The wound is old, it's been there since I
 Was five when those who I thought were
 My friends told me that I was worthless.
 I need You, God, to hold my hand
 As I walk through this valley of pain,
 Where the rocks cut deep through my shoes
 And my clothes are torn to shreds.
 I cry myself to sleep more often now
 That I believe You have closed Your ears
 To my calls.
 I have no one to turn to who knows Your
 Ways and is willing to show me.
 So I wander alone as a lone voice that
 Wails and keens, lost in the desert
 Until someone finds me and takes me
 Home.
 I have been taught by my peers that You
 Did not see fit to give me a soul, and
 Because of that, I am not human, but
 Just an animal that can be beaten and kicked
 Without retribution from on high.
 I need to know what the truth is,
 Before I die.
 My life is supreme torment, and
 No one including You seems to care
 What happens to me.

Fields

BY D.E. HANSEN

There is a comforting emptiness
 To pasture lands and praries,

Brown and stark,
 With lonely trees,

And barren fields
 Occasionally dotted

With life,
 Predators and prey —

Death —
 The life force continues,

Unabated, uncomplicated,
 Soliciting a sigh of ennui.

FICTION

Lunch on the ledge

'Going outside would be almost impossible, it seemed, but the ledge looked so inviting that morning.'

BY KENT W. LESLIE

When you work in a tall office building, as I do, you have to admit that it gets rather stuffy in the offices above the 10th story. The ventilation system was never meant for a skyscraper, it seems. It gets to the point where you just can't function until you've had a comfortable lunch break, or coffee break, or bathroom break, or what have you. Especially when the paperwork piles up.

On any other break, I would normally open up a window, stick my head out for about 50 minutes, stuff my lunch into my face, and get back to work. It's strange that I work in a hot, stuffy building and yet outside there's always this refreshing breeze blowing. It doesn't always smell that great, the scenery sucks, and God knows what the air is doing to my lungs, but it's cool and refreshing, and it perks me up.

Well, one day, I was hot and bothered, and I opened the window to take in some air. And then I thought about going outside.

Leaving the building often involves either climbing down 14 flights of stairs or taking one of two elevators in the building. One of the elevators will not always go to the right floor when you press the button, so nobody uses it. This means that you have one elevator in constant use, moving people up and down 16 floors. Not only that, but there's one of those cheap law firms with the \$20 consultation fee on the second story. Their clients hog the elevator and the elevator

rarely makes it past the third floor. It's one of those old types that go to the nearest floor. The 14th floor is never the nearest floor.

Going outside would be almost impossible, it seemed, but the ledge looked so inviting that morning. It was about a meter wide, and the pigeon crap wasn't really that thick. It was insane, but I climbed out the window and brought my lunchbox.

What a view.

Unfortunately, I hadn't really considered what people usually did when they saw a man on the ledge of a tall building.

I was halfway into my second sandwich when a small crowd of people began to collect on the sidewalk beneath me. Usually, in that part of town, it's mostly street people, but there seemed to be a few people in suits and even a few cops. Some of them pointed.

Wonder what's going on down there, I thought. Must be a street performer.

Then I noticed that some of them were pointing at me. I must have been really dense, be-

"I must have been really dense, because I waved at them and scooted forward on the ledge to get a better look at them."

— Kent W. Leslie

cause I waved at them and scooted forward on the ledge to get a better look at them. Then one of them screamed, all eyes far below focused on me, and I realized that my lunch on the ledge had become what many thought was a suicide attempt.

I was so surprised I almost didn't eat another sandwich. Almost.

"DON'T JUMP!" exclaimed a very loud voice from behind me. I nearly fell off the ledge.

"What in the world..." I shouted.

"WHATEVER IT IS, IT'S NOT WORTH KILLING YOURSELF." It was a cop with a megaphone. He was shaking. "DO YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT?"

"I'm not killing myself," I said, holding up my Thermos. "I'm having lunch."

"WHAT?" he boomed.

"Lunch," I shouted. I held up my sandwich in my other hand. "I'm having lunch. Can you turn that thing off?"

"YOU'RE HAVING LUNCH?" he said, now confused. I was turning red. Everyone in the building, if not the city, could hear that thing screaming in his hand.

"Yes," I said. "Could you turn that thing off?"

I unscrewed the Thermos and poured myself a cup of coffee. He stared at me all the while. The coffee was cold.

"DO YOU REALIZE," he boomed, making me spill the coffee on my pants, "THAT YOU'RE ON THE 14TH FLOOR?"

My good pants. "Turn that thing off!" I shouted, mopping up the coffee with a napkin.

He stuck his head back into the building,



and my boss stuck his head out with the cursed megaphone. "PHILLIPS, DO YOU WANT A RAISE?"

I shrugged. "Sure."

"THEN COME ON INSIDE," he begged. "DON'T JUMP."

"I wasn't planning to," I said, but he had stuck his head back in the window. Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed a fire truck pulling up. The crowd down below was getting bigger.

Suddenly, the cop climbed out the window, holding on for dear life to the side of the building. He still had his megaphone. He raised it to his mouth and said, "GIVE ME YOUR HAND." He then stuck the megaphone into his armpit and reached out his hand.

I shrugged and gave him my hand. The crowd down below began to clap.

He edged slowly toward the window, holding onto the ledge — and me — for dear life.

Maybe it was coincidence, or fate, or an unfortunate set of circumstances, but at that moment a pigeon decided to land, and dump, on the cop's foot.

He panicked, lost his hold on the building, and tipped backward. He let go of my hand and reached for the building, but the megaphone fell out of his armpit. As he grabbed for the megaphone, he fell off the building, grabbed my leg on the way down, and pulled me off the ledge along with him.

He screamed all the way down — through the megaphone.

The fire crew had a net, and they moved it pretty close, but they missed. We fell straight into the pavement and died instantly.

Boy, did that piss me off.

"You idiot!" I screamed at the cop, who

was dead too and the only person who could hear me. "Why didn't you put down the megaphone?"

"I knew it," he said. "I just knew I was going to blow it today."

Max

BY RUSS ALBRIGHT

Black with bits
of contrasting white

Affection with bits
of contrasting hautiness

His study of me: complete

My study of him: ongoing

He is my cat

I, his human.

Epitaph for a pedant

He came

He went

His mind

Unbent.

Bringing him in

BY JEFF D. WEST

Could it have entered her mind (possibly), as the tale of their "intimacy" (impossibly) sputtered from her tongue, as her words fluttered like a vivid shroud around her, that his heart, no matter how spacious, would never shelter her, could never serve her, until she took it in, made it her own?

ESSAY

CNN and a free press

'Attempts to muzzle the press are becoming too routine.'

BY MICHAEL FITZGERALD

Manuel Noriega — hardly anyone's idea of a folk hero — may someday find his name as well-known in legal and press circles as Miranda. Recent events surrounding Noriega's criminal trial on drug charges were another preliminary round in an ongoing "government versus the free press" fight that should be sending chills up and down the spine of anyone who values the First Amendment and a free press.

The case was fairly simple.

Cable News Network obtained copies of audiotapes made of supposedly private conversations between Noriega and his attorneys. The conversations, however, were recorded secretly by the federal government which now admits the taping was routine if questionable. Its legality is also in question, though Noriega had signed a waiver allowing it.

When CNN aired some portions of the tapes, the judge handling Noriega's criminal case ordered CNN to cease broadcasting

and turn over the tapes — or risk being held in contempt of court while he pondered the contents. In response to a plea from CNN to overrule the judge, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the judge's ruling, opining that he be allowed to continue his deliberations whether or not to release the tapes.

The judge's point, of course, was that broadcasting the information on those tapes *might* somehow jeopardize Noriega's right to a fair trial, a standard argument defense attorneys use to suppress publicity about their clients. He demanded the tapes from CNN and for weeks pondered whether or not the contents was fit for public consumption.

Whether the former Panamanian dictator — whose kidnapping from his home nation by U.S. government troops was in the full view of television and newspapers around the world — could ever get a fair, publicity-free trial outside the Himalayas is not the issue.

The issue is simply whether any judge or court has the right to tell a television or radio station, or a newspaper or magazine, what it can and cannot publish.

The issue of government attempting to exercise "prior restraint" is not new. Recent cases all seem to revolve around the rather nebulous rubric of "national security." But what's alarming in this case — besides the simple fact that it happened at all given the circumstances — is the low-key response to the matter from the press and the great yawning American public. Perhaps it may

be because the case involved a television network, not some print media giant like the *New York Times*. (Had some judge told the

Times it couldn't publish transcripts of these tapes, the howls of journalistic protest would've shaken every pigeon loose from roosts from Brooklyn to Seattle.) Perhaps it's because Noriega is no longer really fashionable to read about. (Consider if these had been the secret tapes of Donald and Ivana Trump talking in their boudoir!) Perhaps it's simply the seediness of Noriega himself, as if bothering with him will somehow get the press — and readers — dirty.

Regardless, while judges ponder such issues, the public is without information to make decisions.

The press is timid enough. With the dark threatening clouds of libel lawsuits always in the background (and attendant legal costs), most editors are prone to take the safest course, preferring to publish stories which quote liberally from virtually liability proof public records. While the ruling was eventually favorable to the news agency, it only adds another layer of cold air that editors of newspapers and magazines (and news directors at broadcast outlets) have to deal with.

Even though the judge eventually said CNN could broadcast the tapes, if the case makes the press pause the next time an attorney thumps on the table threatening to go to court to block publication or broadcast, the losers will be public which has a right to know what's going on, oftentimes *precisely* about things what the government doesn't want the public to know.

The CNN case drew what attention it did because of the newsworthiness of Noriega and the television station's reputation. The incident unfortunately is hardly isolated. Attempts to muzzle the press are becoming all too routine.

Only a few weeks ago, a small newspaper in South Carolina, was held in contempt of court for publishing the name of a suspect in a drug case. (*The name of a suspect!*) The suspect's name was mentioned mistakenly by the judge, in open court. The judge ordered the reporters there to not publish the name or risk being cited for contempt. They risked the contempt citation by publishing the suspects name, but the judge's order was

overturned last week by the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals which said the judge had erred in demanding that the newspaper hold up publication. Even so, the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in the CNN case likely made the editors of the *Rock Hill (S.C.) Herald* more than a little nervous.

Perhaps the press didn't load its heavy guns for CNN's battle because it saw that

such battles are costly and less-than-popular, given the temperament of the public and *certainly* the courts. In the past few years, the courts

have hacked away at civil rights, most recently by upholding the legality of highway roadblocks, police barricades ostensibly in place to catch drunken drivers. The courts failed to see (or perhaps *did see* quite clearly) that these same roadblocks could be used for many police and government purposes. Roadblocks are quite popular in certain Latin American countries and Eastern Europe. (*Your papers, please...*)

At the university level, numerous institutions across the nation are blindly ignoring the right of free speech as they institute intricate codes for public speaking to provide sanctions against anyone using arguably racist or sexist or simply obnoxious language.

It might seem like bad timing to be arguing for the free press and First Amendment rights. But is there ever a good time?

Even though CNN last week won its argument and may now broadcast the contents of the tapes, it lost the whatever newsworthiness and timeliness the tapes had — the thing so vital to television viewers. And the case also seems to have made it a *given* from the nation's highest court that any court has the power to put a hand — anytime — over the camera lens to keep you from seeing (or in this case, hearing) what's going on, which, of course, is what government officials frequently want. At least the courts can do that until some judge, somewhere, decides sometime that the material is somehow fit for public view.

While the tapes were held in the safe hands of the judge, many pundits speculated that Noriega told his attorneys details about some dirty dealings with the Bush administration in the hopes of getting Bush to intercede in his case. That seems to be untrue. But what about next time and the next challenge from someone who really has something to hide?

Of course, if you really think about it, will we even get to read about the legal challenge? Or will a judge enjoin the television station or a newspaper to not mention the case at all — or risk a contempt of court citation?

It could be a very quiet — and disquieting — future.

Winter

BY L. NGUYEN

Like the turbulence of
my soul, smoke from a lonely lit cigarette
amidst an ashtray full of long dead peers
confusedly sketched out tortuous, dissipating paths —
To nothingness.

Like the sorrow of
my heart, matching hapless beats in unison with
a half-empty cup
of coffee, long since ceased to have warmth.
In the numbness of this night, jelled an ernpathic
camaraderie mutuality and,
a trio was borned!

Like old friends, we embraced each other's
emptiness.

Like tired soldiers, we traded past battles' pains.
Riding the comfort of companionship through the night
then,

puffing the last breath of the shrivelled cigarette and
swallowing the last drops of staled coffee —
good-bye my fortuitous friends; now that
you've found peace.

I now alone awake in the last hours of the night,
a single entity trapped in confusion and
tattered dreams

Another night, like the one before —
and the one before that.

All because I had dared to...

Love!

a Woman.

FICTION

Nice

'Imagine Mom and Dad having an argument over "nice."'

BY RUSSELL BUETTNER

"You don't mean nice when you say 'nice.'"

"Yes I do mean 'nice.' Don't be silly. Nice is nice."

"No. 'Nice' means one thing to you, and people like you, but it means something totally different to me."

"When I said she is the nicest girl here, I meant she's nice, that's all."

"No, 'nice' to you just means she agrees with you. When you're a shit and make her make up for you not doing your job because you don't want to engage your brain or because you're too proud to admit you can't always do it, she smiles and says, 'It's OK, I'll do it.'"

"Sounds like she is pretty damn nice to me."

"Exactly! That's exactly my point! Nice to you is when somebody takes whatever you dish out with a smile. Anyone who says squat, anyone who says, 'I don't deserve that,' isn't nice as far as you're concerned. As long as someone else is doing the giving, everything is 'nice.'"

"Look, if I made you jealous, I'm sorry. I was just trying to say that I think she's..."

"Jealous? God, you think jealousy is what this is about?"

"I don't see what this is about. You get so uptight sometimes. Everything means so much. Everything I say and do has all these other meanings attached to it. I wish we could just relax. I wish I could be myself."

"When are you ever not 'just yourself'? When do you ever think about anyone else, and how what you do is going to affect them?"

"Oh God... we're not back to that Greenpeace deal again are we? Look, I sent the check."

"Yes, John, I saw the check. And no, that's not what this is about. This is about what you think 'nice' means."

"I used to think you were nice."

"But now you don't?"

"No, I just said that. I just don't see what you're so upset about."

They stopped as the secretary they were talking about strolled by the break room. He refilled his coffee cup and remembered seeing other office couples standing there. First, they coo, then slyly touch hands, and within a couple of months they're having some stupid argument over something one of them heard.

She refilled her Dixie cup from the water cooler. Its giant ga-glucks made her digress.

"God, doesn't it seem absurd we have to ship in water?"

"Yeah, just so it'll taste 'nice.'"

"That's very clever John... look, what I'm trying to say is that nice is determined by what you do, not by what you say. You think you're nice to me because you buy me



dinner or send me flowers."

"What, those things aren't..."

"Yes, John, those things can be nice, but if it doesn't mean more than that, it doesn't mean anything. Nice is harder than that."

"Seems like there should be a better word."

"There should be, but there isn't."

"This is all about yesterday isn't it? I thought we straightened that out? I thought I told you why I forgot? If you're going to hold that against me... why can't we move past that?"

"See, I guess that's it. You think that because you say the right things, because you apologize and say you love me, that anything you do is OK, that you should be forgiven. But what I'm saying is we're responsible for the things we do. When you do something shitty, and say you're sorry, I don't necessarily have to say, 'Yes, dear sweet John, all is well,' just so that you will consider me nice."

"I thought forgiveness was part of being nice."

"Yeah, well, I guess my point is, too much of what you call 'forgiveness' and 'niceness' adds up to what I call stupidity."

"Fine. So everyone is either unforgiving or stupid. That sounds like a wonderful world."

She watched him march away from the break area. His perpetually wet hair and tortoise shell glasses shimmered under the fluorescent light as he turned into his office.

He cut left through the doorway, grabbed his coat and brief case, and hoofed it for the elevator. She sipped one final drink of water to give him enough time to drive away, then left for her car.

He cranked the volume and stomped on the gas. The car jugged back and forth from turbocharged posi-traction on rough city streets. If she wanted to be gone, fine, nice to have known you — later! Imagine Mom and Dad having an argument over "nice." If Dad came home sober, that was "nice," the rest was gratuitous. It was time anyway, time

for something new. Things were too complicated. So what. It's Monday, Bobby will be at the Goal Post for football, there will be plenty of possibilities, and the best Doors song ever just came blasting over 10 factory-installed speakers. Now that's "nice."

She pulled away from the shadows of the skyscrapers. Is it too much to ask the same

of the people around you as you ask yourself? Cars, planes, cities, jobs, everywhere — it's so easy to run away today, to hide from anything difficult, to base your life on improving your status, sacrificing thought and consideration. The words lose their meaning, drying up like the qualities and emotions for which they once stood. You come so far, but only your car changes; "mobility" they call it. You expect to feel more, to be treated on a higher level, but the Johns' keep reminding you: Despite how far you have come, the simplest needs are always the most elusive.

"Met a little girl just an hour ago... Nana nana nana na, let the wind blow... nananananananana... LA woman's gonna have to do... LA woman's gonna have to do... city at night, city at NIGHT! Yeah!"

One more time she walked alone across the beach. She sat where the water barely reached, let it bubble up to her feet, and looked along the shoreline. The water and the land are as all things should be. The waves pummel the beach, but together the two create life, the product of a continual and natural struggle over where one ends and the other begins.

Spring

BY L. NGUYEN

Another love affair turned stormy before the courtship has even begun.

Without a silver of warming, an unblossomed love turned cold, and dark, and full of pent up frustrations, like a summer thunderstorm.

In the midst of chaos, a thought flashed by — love has no pride —

Love was, undeniably, there — full and selfless.

But, alas, so was prider — strong and unyielding.

Was it because love was, somehow, lacked?

Or was it because the pride was so fierce?

Longing for harmony, I eyed mistfully the storm's lone eye.

In the desperate search for an elusive inner peace

to match my outwardly calm and aloof shell

I lunged — and in an eerie instant,

Escaped,

from the reaches of the storm.

The sky beyond was blue

The sun was shining its — mesmerizing warmth

And the wind, no longer threatening, was full of tranquility!

Eyeing back at the storm

now but a speck of insignificance

is this ocean of life, I sighed.

With a last longing look, I turned

and set course for one that has gone astray'd.

A new sail was raised, purposeful and

clear of inhibition.

Yet, at the precarious hinge of consciousness

A tinge of regret lingers

in the recess of mind

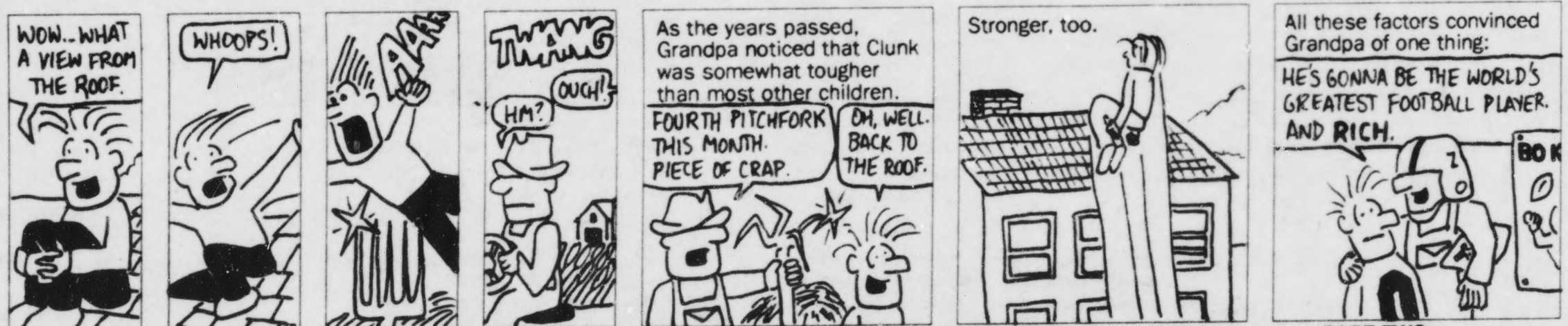
Broken Mood

BY STEVEN W. LOCKETT

Behold the fetally cowering self, wrapped within his woe. Dances around this neurontic nightmare the ever Presence, bouncing and caressing the shell of no entry — self pity as impenetrable as concrete. Heedless of relief, the suffocating Vision becomes increasingly ingrown, festering on dark imaginations of impending dissolution.

Abruptly, squirming reason is silenced by the stolidly rational Exposition creating the present. A slow melting is suggested; pursed lips are cracked by the penetrating pingers of rippling joy, inescapably accumulating with compounding frequency to tease the self-conscious into blazing smile. All bonds are dissolved; the motion of being, subject no longer to chemical order, transmutes infinite acceleration into frictionless subsistence. Thoughts of all past are engulfed in shimmering laughter; the shell evaporates into the Stuff shell construction deemed necessary to guard against.

If this glimpse is not true to the future, will at least a greater proximation be? Stay tuned, for to survive is to postpone the awakening.



Kent W. Leslie presents: **SUPERDUPERMAN!** PART TWO: Clunk grows up, gets a job, and gets a costume.



FICTION

In search of the perfect date

'I like a man who can caress my brain — that's more of a turn-on than any acrobatic athlete.'

BY CAROL FUCCILLO

When I first moved out to California, I told my friends that I was in pursuit, not only of a good cheap education, but a lobotomized cowboy with a Lamborghini. They laughed, and wished me luck.

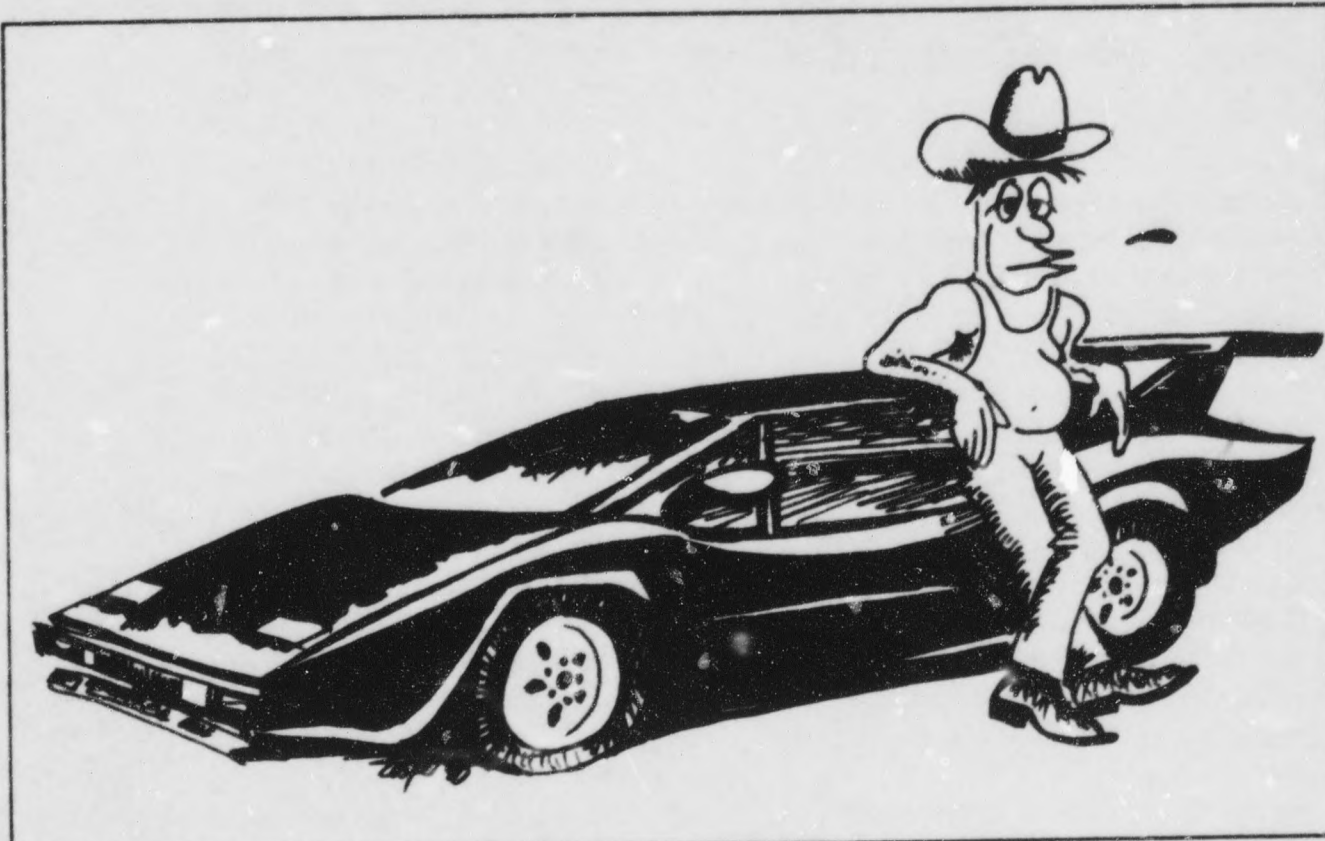
But I have a problem. I like Really Intelligent Men. Not the pseudointellectual bearded, bald, bare-assed types, but the really intelligent, Mensan types. The kind of guy who can memorize a book once read. Who can (sometimes) bore you for hours talking about Einstein's theory of relativity. I like a man who can caress my brain — that's more of a turn-on than any acrobatic athlete who brings his maneuvers into the bedroom. I'm making love long before the bedroom, and the physical side is just icing on the cake (or anywhere else for that matter).

However, along with liking (or loving) an RIM, one has to deal with the downside of an RIM. Many times, these guys are just on the verge of insanity (or genius, and

sometimes the two aren't mutually exclusive). Because his brain is functioning at such an accelerated pace, he will often get mad or break out in rage at others, or find fault in the smallest mistake (in his estimation).

In addition, I've found many of these RIMs to be very manipulative. They can caress your brain, or they can try to destroy it. The mental exhilaration of being in love with an RIM can deteriorate to a deleterious state unless you keep a strong lock on your cerebrum and cerebellum, and make sure that you know that although you may possess a lower IQ, it doesn't mean that you are deficient in any way.

And sometimes, an RIM, whether intentionally or unintentionally, can make you feel that way. I recently had a DATE FROM HELL with an RIM. There was chemistry, sweet chemistry between us at the start. Our minds immediately interlocked, and we could, (I felt) communicate without words; instead, an interchange of optic signals would be enough.



He was one of the classic RIMs: bespectacled, greying hair, professional in nature. A Ph.D. But once he opened his mouth, a postulating-piled-higher-and-deeper-pool-of-profuse-poo-poo like never before seen came pouring out. I was astounded. He was trying

to "find himself" and wanted me to help him to find that self. He wanted my opinion on how to fix his emotional and spiritual life. He asked me why people attract? What was the scientific explanation for that?

Later, I felt invaded, raped

spiritually and emotionally, and it took me several days to get over the anger. I decided from that point on to give up on RIMs for a while. I'm looking for a RSM (a really stupid man) now, preferably lobotomized, with lots of cash and a Lamborghini.

Struggle

BY SHANNAN BENNETT

Falling
I can't escape
My own soul
A guilty conscience
A suppressed being
My heart aches
From emptiness
My head pains
From thoughts
My body yearns
From lack of touch
My soul begs
For peace
My hands tremble
For something to write
Who am I
To those that
Pretend to
Love me
Who can explain
This underlying feeling
Of nothingness
That is everything
Someone please
Tell me
The secrets
To love

ESSAY

When, oh when?

'Few areas of the earth have escaped the effects of the terror produced by the forces of fanaticism.'

BY RUSS ALBRIGHT

With the demise of Adolph Hitler in 1945, the civilized world gave a collective sigh, fully content to believe there could never be such a demonic individual on a newly enlightened planet. I imagine a great many other generations felt the same when Alexander of Macedonia, Genghis Khan, Napoleon Bonaparte and assorted other world conquerors departed the scene.

It generally occurs in the minds of the average moral individual to place faith in the "inherent goodness" of man and his intent to live in peace and prosperity. In spite of the indications, historically, to prove otherwise, the majority wish to live out their lives unimpeded by armed conflict and its attendant horrors. I, too, believe this to be true.

Unfortunately, the majority do not temper the actions of nations led by activists who, unsatisfied with their status, seek to lead people into martial course. Among the honest leaders of nations exists a small percentage who seek to create destinies without consideration for the souls populating their respective realms. Sociopathic in nature, they adopt whatever guises are

necessary to meet their own visions of immortality.

As a result of the headline-grabbing actions of the superpowers, many such despots have been actively engaged in forging followings in smaller but potent countries around the world. Their actions have been largely ignored by those superpowers

"Among the honest leaders of nations exists a small percentage who seek to create destinies without consideration for the souls populating their respective realms."
— Russ Albright

for one or more political or economic expedients.

The world has produced many such nationalistic fanatics. Few areas of the earth have escaped the effects of the terror produced by the forces of fanaticism unleashed by such individuals: the Americas, Europe, Africa and the Middle and Far-Eastern Asia. Prominent activists in Cuba, Chile, Brazil, Colombia and Central America have affected the West. Europe has scarcely seen a century pass without such activity. The East and Middle East have produced their more than fair share as well. Africa's emerging

nations have seen a great deal of such activists.

Iraq has produced a standing army of incredible numbers from their recent war with Iran. Wielding one of the largest conventional armies in the world and boasting nuclear capabilities, it has emerged undaunted by larger, more powerful nations. Fueled by religious fanaticism, it has seized Kuwait and poses a threat to the surrounding nations.

Ultimately, such countries as Iraq are the yield of the major powers who have supplied these nations with the wherewithal to become threats to other peoples. In the exploitation of the Middle East for its oil stores such countries as Iraq have been denied little in return for the supplies of petroleum furnished to the consumer nations.

We shall continue to suffer from the results of our unwise support of such nations for economic and political reasons. One can but hope that soon, before more disastrous world conflict, humankind will grasp the teachings of the past and cease making repetitive mistakes. By meeting these temporary exigencies we are destined to continue to suffer the consequences of these monsters we have historically created.

FIRST PERSON

A navy adventure

'Sitting at the bottom of the ocean is a scary feeling...listening to the sound of every breath.'

BY LARRY CARDENAZ

I was a member of a Navy special forces unit known as the SEALs. SEALs had the reputation of being tough and extra special. I was no different: I was tough, I was special, I was a SEAL. The SEALs in the navy are the same as the Green Berets in the army, but ask anyone in special forces, army, marines, or air force, and they would say that the SEALs are the best!

It was fun being a SEAL; not only did we receive special treatment, but we received respect from other sailors around the fleet and from personnel from other services. We had been through longer and tougher physical training than any other special forces unit in the military. We knew that we could literally take care of ourselves. The training was also mental. This enabled us to exude the confidence it took to do a variety of different jobs; dangerous jobs, jobs that required strength, endurance and, perhaps most of all, that confidence. We received quite a number of privileges because of the special status SEAL Team held. Although there were many sailors that resented us for the privileges we received, they would never mention it face to face. Deep down they knew that we were special, and entitled to special privileges because we were SEALs.

Our platoon was off the coast of the Philippines near Subic Bay, aboard the U.S.S. Greyfish. The Greyfish is a special submarine refitted to accommodate Swimmer Delivery Vehicles, navy minisubs known as SDVs. They are used to deliver divers close to shore or into enemy harbors. They can be launched from miles offshore off the deck of the submerged submarine, be in and out with mission accomplished quickly and efficiently with minimum possibility of detection. These SDVs are operated by navy SEALs.

I was a navigator on one of these minisubs and, along with the rest of the platoon, was preparing for another practice mission. We still had a few hours before we started, so as I relaxed in my bunk I had a slight grin on my face as I thought of all the privileges I had enjoyed for being so "special." I thought about walking right up to the front of the chow line ahead of everyone else and taking as long as I wanted to eat. I didn't worry about the rest of the crew needing a place to sit so they could shove a few bites down before hurrying off to stand duty. I thought about being able to watch movies anytime I wanted and any movie I wanted, unlike the crew who had to wait until the scheduled time and watch the scheduled movie.

I was in very good shape and I knew it. When I walked, I walked with an air of authority and confidence and knew that if people wanted trouble, here's where they could find it. Being a SEAL gave me a sense of invincibility; nothing at all could hurt me,

nothing! I liked being a member of SEAL Team. It was one big adventure after another.

At 2100, it was time to get ready for the mission. I really enjoyed operating off the deck of a submerged submarine at night; it was exciting. I had practiced this many times and knew just what had to be done on this trip. It was a harbor penetration, demolition raid. There would be three groups of divers, including the deck supervisor. He would be in charge of the activities related to the submarine, making sure all the right valves were opened and shut at the right time. He also had direct communications with those inside the submarine through a squawk box located in a bubble at the rear of the hanger. Two other divers would help on deck to launch the SDV. The second group of divers were the members of the actual raid. Six divers would take the explosives from the SDV and place them on the target, set the charges and return. The last group was the pilot of the SDV and me, the navigator. As the navigator, I was responsible for directing the pilot through obstacles such as reefs, buoys, piers and any boats or ships in the area.

The officer inside responsible for the dive as a whole is called the dive supervisor. He gave the signal to go once everyone was ready. We all moved into the hanger and made last minute checks on all our equipment. At 2200 the hanger was sealed, and flooding of the hanger commenced. The SDV was known as a wet submersible, meaning there was no air inside of it, only water. Each diver breathed compressed air from the large central SCUBA tank inside and had his own pair of double tanks on his back. One last check was made on our air regulators and SCUBA tanks by breathing from them. As the water rose over our heads we started breathing normally from the SCUBA, and everyone gave the okay sign. The lights were turned to red so our night vision would be adjusted once all the lights were off and the hanger door was opened. Once the pressure inside the hanger was equal to that of outside the submarine, the huge hanger door was opened. As I looked into the blackness of the sea, the adrenaline began to flow rapidly through my blood, giving me a sense of excitement few people will ever feel. There was no moon out on that night so it was much darker than usual. The deck crew broke open some chemical lights to mark the deck and this created an eerie green glow, casting strange shadows across the deck. When I looked at the other divers' faces, only the reflection of the green light shown on their masks. This made them look like faceless ghosts slowly drifting along with the ocean currents.

The SDV was pushed outside of the hanger, and I could feel the rush of the ocean current as the straps of my mask fluttered along the side of my face. I checked my screen and, using the underwater communi-



Photo courtesy of Larry Cardenaz

Navy SEAL team in the hanger deck of a submarine "waiting for the go."

"Everyone was still and quiet. The only sound that could be heard was the hum of the electronic equipment and the eerie wail of the hull as the pressure of the deep tried to push its way into the living space of a submarine way past its prime." — Larry Cardenaz

cations system, told the pilot that it was working fine. The pilot then received an okay from each of the other divers inside the SDV, and when everyone responded with an okay the pilot told the deck supervisor we were ready for launch. As the deck crew pushed us toward the edge of the submarine deck, once again excitement started to build. The deck supervisor signaled all clear and then he gave the sign, GO! The motor was switched on and the line released. We were launched off the submarine deck not too much unlike a plane from an aircraft carrier. Once we were clear of the submarine, the darkness of the ocean quickly closed in on us. The green chemical lights on the submarine deck rapidly became smaller as the distance between the submarine and the SDV grew larger. As the SDV flew through the ocean, it was only a few seconds before nothing could be seen except the small red lights on the dials of our instrument panel and the phosphorescent glow caused by marine micro-organisms. We were alone in the

middle of the Pacific Ocean miles from shore in water thousands of feet deep. Since we would ride for more than two hours before we reached the harbor, there was nothing to do except wait.

As the pilot got us closer to the harbor entrance, I was able to use my navigation skill to recognize the buoys that marked the entrance to the harbor. I guided us close to the piers where the targets were located. When we were about one hundred yards away, we landed on the bottom. The swimmers left and the pilot and I waited for them to do their part of the mission and return. It was a little after midnight and time was critical. The swimmers had to be at the targets at a time coinciding with the middle of the scheduled watch the guards stood. This would give the people who had just gone off enough time to fall asleep and the people who just came on time to be lulled into the dull routine of the watch. If by

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It's not just a job...

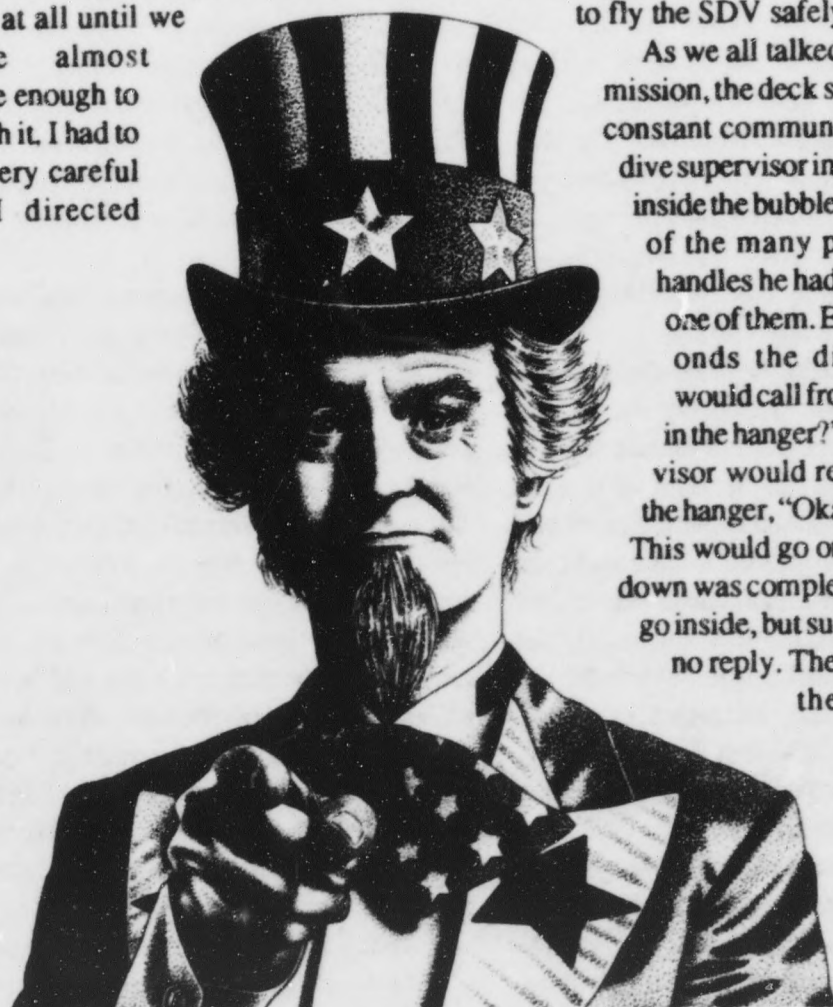
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chance the guards saw any of the swimmers, they would be silently killed and hidden.

The time was 0030. I felt as though we had been waiting longer than half an hour for the swimmers to return. Sitting at the bottom of the ocean is a scary feeling, just waiting, listening to the sound of every breath of compressed air I forced into my lungs, wondering what was going on at the targets and if everything was all right. I stared into the blackness, straining my eyes, looking for the first sign of their return. It was thirty-five minutes when the pilot spotted one of the swimmers. Soon they were all in sight and into the SDV. Everything had gone smoothly and there were no mishaps. The charges had been set for 0100 which gave us twenty-five minutes to be out of the harbor before the explosion. I had to keep a very close watch on my SONAR screen to allow the pilot to fly at full throttle without worrying about hitting any obstacles.

We did not make it before the charges went off. We could feel the shock of the explosion even though we were a long distance from the blast. We were clear now and could relax a bit, if we were able, during the long transit back to the submarine waiting for us out there miles from shore. Once again, my job was crucial. I had to tell the pilot where to go. If I made an error it could cause us to miss the submarine. The time wasted trying to find it would drain the batteries and our air supply. Again, things went according to plan. I started picking up the signal from the deck of the submarine and directed the pilot toward it. As we closed in I could see the silhouette of the submarine on my screen. When we were within one hundred yards of it, I instructed the pilot to slow down. It was again important for me to read the screen accurately because at night the pilot would not be able to see the submarine at all until we

were almost close enough to touch it, I had to be very careful as I directed



him.

The deck crew, who had gone inside the submarine, had come back out to wait at a designated time. The chemical lights came into view quickly as we closed in on the submarine. I guided the pilot in until he could see the deck well enough to make the final approach and land. The deck crew hooked up the SDV, then pushed it back inside the hanger. The hanger door was closed and sealed and then the lights were turned on. The mission was over, and more important it had been a success.

The deck supervisor was getting ready to drain and pressurize the hanger. Soon I would be able to eat and get back in my bunk. I was still very excited about the mission and how well it had gone but I was tired and ready to get back inside. Everyone got out of the SDV except the pilot and me. We just sat there and waited.

The deck supervisor went inside the bubble and told them inside that the drain-down of the hanger had commenced. The dive supervisor, along with the doctor, kept the dive tables current so there would not be any decompression sickness. They were the ones the deck supervisor talked to.

As the water level lowered, everyone took off his mask and started talking about the mission. Although it was just an exercise, the excitement of the suspense and danger left me feeling fantastic. The explosions were real but not on an enemy ship. The harbor was real but it was our own. We still had to sneak around because no one knew we were there and were not supposed to find out. We pretended that everyone was the enemy. For me the most satisfying part was when I did my job with the SONAR screen. I was good at knowing what was on the screen and took pride in being able to tell the pilot exactly what he needed to know in order to fly the SDV safely.

As we all talked more about the mission, the deck supervisor was in constant communication with the dive supervisor inside. As he stood inside the bubble leaning on some of the many pipes and valve handles he had his arm through one of them. Every twenty seconds the dive supervisor would call from inside, "Okay in the hanger?" The deck supervisor would reply from inside the hanger, "Okay in the hanger." This would go on until the drain-down was complete and we would go inside, but suddenly there was no reply. The call from inside the submarine came, "Okay in the hanger?"

Okay in the hanger?" but still no reply. The captain and the officer of the deck, who both monitored the entire operation from the control center of the submarine, wanted to know what the problem was. The dive supervisor could not explain. He could see through the inner hatch of the lock-in chamber and then through a small porthole into the hanger; the deck supervisor was still there. What could be wrong? The captain tried now with a greater sense of urgency, "Is everything okay in the hanger?" Then the dive supervisor asked over and over, "Okay in the hanger? Okay in the hanger? Okay in the hanger?" The only answer was silence.

Almost five minutes had passed, and to those waiting inside the submarine the wait was like an eternity. Everyone was still and quiet. The only sound that could be heard was the hum of the electronic equipment and the eerie wail of the hull as the pressure of the deep tried to push its way into the living space of a submarine way past its prime.

The wait continued until the water was low enough to open the hatch to the hanger. The hatch was quickly opened and the air rushed into the hanger. The doctor ran in, then the captain and dive supervisor. The deck supervisor who had his arm through the large valve handle regained consciousness as the fresh air hit him. He saw other men lying on the deck and hurried to help them. The pilot and I, still sitting inside the SDV, regained consciousness slowly. I was dazed as I saw the other divers on the deck receiving mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. The pi-

India

BY SUSMITA RAMANI

Across the world, o'er endless miles you call me,
The land which is of me so much a part,
With your strange, exotic sights and scents and sounds,
Your essence lives forever in my heart.

Embellishing your ground, the holy temples stand,
And buildings, mosques and tombs, their Mogul domes
Arching up to reach your blue and peaceful sky
Which heavens, to my ancestors, are home.

Through you, like a woman's sari, Ganges flows,
While dusty rickshaws fly across the land,
Tearing through the hot and humid, narrow roads,
Past marketplaces where the people stand.

Hurriedly, in foreign tongues, they argue there,
The people, in the bright and blazing sun.
Amidst loud banter, rupees fast exchanging hands,
Buying, selling, till the day is done.

And in the night, the same stars shine upon you,
O'er cities and small villages so fair —
India — wherever I may go, I know
That there will be a part of my heart there.

lot and I had been saved from drowning by staying inside the SDV. The others had been standing alongside and had passed out due to the lack of oxygen. Then they fell into the water which was just below the level of the SDV and drowned. The deck supervisor's arm through the valve handle kept him from falling down into the water and also kept him visible through the window where the dive supervisor could see him. As the hanger door was opened and the fresh air came in, those of us not in the water were all right but those that had fallen in the water could not be revived.

What had gone wrong? The investigation found that a valve had stuck. When it was turned to drain the hanger, the water went out and fresh air was vented in. Although the valve to allow the air in indicated open, it was actually closed, and as the water drained, the hanger became a vacuum and everyone passed out.

Being a member of the SEALs gave me confidence and a feeling that I was special. It made me tough, strong, and physically fit, but being a member of SEAL Team does not make a person immortal. Eight people had died.

The navy still has practice missions off the Philippines, and SEALs still drive SDVs. I am sure they feel all the same feelings I felt, and they do it for the same reasons; for the fun, for the excitement, for the adventure. Just as the commercial says,

"NAVY. IT'S NOT JUST A JOB.
IT'S AN ADVENTURE"

FICTION

The wedding: the cop, his bride, her son

'The immediate concern, of course, was whether Hector would bust his new son.'

BY DAVID E. BRUMFIELD

When Allen found out that his mother, Carol, was getting married for the fourth time, he thought, "Oh no, it's not Rob, is it?" Rob is a married man who had been seeing Carol for the last 15 years — "I'm going to leave her, honey, really I am." She had been the faithful mistress, living her second-fiddle life as honestly as she could: "I don't want to get married again anyway," she thought, as she skated through the late '70s, enjoying the feminist freedom of the times. But down below the politics, she always wanted to get married again, perhaps to Rob, but if she had her way, to a man like her first love: Allen's real father.

And so when Allen heard his mother on the phone say, "Guess what?" He immediately felt the dread, that awful sinking feeling that something permanently rash was going to transpire. "His name is Hector," she said.

Hector, who the fuck is Hector?

Hector is a cop, a 20-year veteran in some small yet indigenously violent city in L.A. — Lynwood.

"He's a little older," she said, "10 years older."

A cop.

"Wha... wher... wh... — well, congratulations," Allen said, trying to sound upbeat but not quite sure if he should. There were problems: She had just "broken up" with Rob — Rob, the married son of a bitch. Wasn't this a little soon? a little rash? a little reboundage? Plus, Carol, he's a cop.

Allen, however, didn't say anything too negative; in fact, he was rather pleased with the way he could muster the face, the polite neutrality. Besides, Carol did sound happy. (Although compared to Rob, anyone half-way nice would make her happy.) But, listening to her describe the Cop, Allen remembered the time his mother told him that if she "had it to do all over again," she would be a cop, which was interesting because Allen had always wondered where he got his criminal thoughts, those transient moments when something happened in his life — a dilemma between good and evil — and he decided to explore evil, explore the more criminal aspects of the dilemma, create perhaps the perfect crime. It was an exhilarating experience that most people were afraid to admit, Allen thought.

So Allen was a little suspicious, but he allowed his mother the moment. After he hung up he remembered all the ex-husbands and boyfriends she had had who always seemed to take advantage of her; they would fall head-over-heels in love with her — she is very beautiful: blonde, tall, independent, nice teeth — but after a while they would either start cheating on her or become so jealous that they would make it impossible for her to live a normal life (they would

follow her, accuse her of cheating, beat her up). So she deserved a little happiness, she deserved respect, for she is a fair, decent, lovable person.

And so the date was set, the place and all the other wedding formalities. Hector, being the ever-punctilious policeman, called Allen later to personally ask, as they say, his permission. "Yeah, no problem," Allen said, perhaps too nonchalantly. He tried to rebound quickly by saying, "I'm happy that she's happy."

A few weeks later Allen had to fly down to L.A. for his 10-year high school reunion,



so he met Hector. He was definitely older, had premature grey hair and was Mexican — Hector *Gonzales*, of course, Mexican — no problem. (Allen just didn't know; he was caught off guard, not that it mattered.) Great, Allen thought, perhaps I can finally learn Spanish without taking a boring class — *buenas dias*, *Taco Bell*. Now he could learn it the real way, cuss words first.

And so they broke the ice that weekend, but never really had time to talk. About the only thing Allen remembered was the jokes Hector told. One night before bed — Hector was already living at the house — Hector and Carol were retiring and as they were saying goodnight, Hector says, "Yeah, I get up real early, about 4 o'clock." Carol looks up at him — he's about 6'2", she about 5'9" — and kind of hits him on the arm and says, "No you don't."

"Yep," he says, "I get up at 4 o'clock, go to the bathroom and then go back to bed." Everyone laughed. Hector cracked several jokes that weekend. The other one Allen remembered — and perhaps it was one of those "you-had-to-be-there jokes" — was on one hot afternoon when Hector and Allen were standing by a window, looking outside for no particular reason, and Hector says, "Yeah, I know why it has been so hot lately."

Allen asks, "Oh yeah, why?"

"The sun," Hector says.

At that point, Allen knew that Hector was no ordinary policeman — maybe he was, but Allen thought there was something different about him.

At any rate, the wedding day finally arrived and Allen rented a tux, but he wasn't in the wedding, which was just as well with him. Who wants to light 300 candles or walk 450 people down the aisles?

Allen was affected, however, by not being in the wedding when it finally came down to the last few minutes before the bells rang. He wanted, somehow, to be a part of it — his sister was in it; he, too, should be in it — but he understood the reasoning: he was from out of town now (he had flown in the same day as the wedding) and couldn't be a part of the preliminary rituals, which

were a few things that struck Allen as he sat watching his mother marry a cop. The immediate concern, of course, was whether Hector would bust his new son. Allen was not a criminal, really, but did partake in the occasional, social, recreational drug habits of his time, i.e. anything he could get his hands on. No, he was a light partier, but nonetheless a partier, and in this drastic age of "zero tolerance," Allen wondered if he would be hanged, shot or mutilated if the Cop found, say, the fat joint which lay happily in the front pocket of Allen's tux.

But there were other, more important things Allen pondered as he sat in the pew, like how his mother could actually go through another marriage again after having so much shit happen to her because of men. How could she stand and look dreamily into the eyes of this man, this cop? Perhaps that was the thing — Cophood. It does have its distinction. Maybe she finally wanted the security, despite her feminist independence. At the very least, Cophood is — in a way — a noble profession. Perhaps she desired a part of that — she did want to be a cop; maybe this marriage was a way to fulfill that dream. Allen finally, however, accepted the possibility that perhaps she just loved him. Indeed, she was radiant, smiling with those big teeth, looking like she did in the old days — before the bastards.

The wedding ended with kisses and pictures, and then everyone bailed to the reception to slam down drinks. Indeed, it was a sight: several hundred cops in an Elk's lodge dancing in cheap suits to Mexican music, eating Mexican food and drinking like fish. (The Mexican food, incidentally, gave everyone diarrhea the next day.)

Allen was the first to dance with his mother and when he let the next man in line take over, he had a strange feeling as he let go of his mother's hand that a long, bitter chapter of their lives was ending. They smiled knowingly and were, for once, relieved that there would be no more stupid men.

The reception was a smash — someone even danced on the tables — and finally, in the wee hours of the morning most of the guests had left, but some of the immediate family were still there; and Allen, Carol and Hector got hungry (it had been several hours since dinner was served), so they ate leftovers, only the leftovers weren't tucked neatly away in Tupperware containers. They were still in these huge pots back in the kitchen. So the cop, his bride and her son pulled these pots off the stove and onto the ground — so they could get to them better — and ate. They sat on the ground and ate Mexican food until they were stuffed, but because they were appropriately inebriated, food went everywhere. Beans landed and smeared all over their clothes... salsa stains... rice — it was a mess, they were a mess, but they were happy: fat, happy and married.

ESSAY

The price of perfection

'If the error is egregious, she may well take the time to write a letter.'

BY LAUREL RYER-SMITH

Like Sisyphus of Greek mythology, doomed forever to roll a huge stone up a hill only to have it roll down again just before it reached the top, the perfectionist, too, never quite reaches the top. Unlike Sisyphus, whose punishment was imposed on him by the gods, the perfectionist punishes

herself. She sets extremely high standards and is displeased with anything less. She is compelled by several inner voices which urge her on and give her no respite until she meets these standards. She has little sense of confidence or sense of accomplishment, but a great deal of suffering.

The most compelling voice which the perfectionist hears tells her that she must not fail. Her

greatest fear and her deepest secret is the specter of failure. When she submits her prose to a contest and receives second prize, she does not congratulate herself. Instead, she chastises herself for her inability to write as well or better than the first-prize winner. Rarely does she question whether or not her expectations are realistic: Once she sets her goal, she will not compromise. If she discovers midway through

the semester that her 18-unit schedule requires more work than she anticipated, she will not consider dropping a course: 18 units she will carry, no matter the stress it creates. Often, a perfectionist will avoid something she would like to try, rather than fail in the execution of it. If she cannot expertly mat her photographs the first time she uses an Xacto-knife, she will pay someone else to do it — ignoring the reality that such a skill requires much practice.

As nothing short of perfect suits her, her best is never good enough. Good enough is 100 percent on a test, not the 92 percent she berates herself for having scored. She takes no pleasure from having answered nearly all the questions correctly. She immediately reassesses the questions she missed and "shoulds" herself to death: "I should have studied harder; I shouldn't have missed such a simple question," she agonizes. Such test results cause her to remember other less-than-perfect efforts, and she concludes that more such consequences lie in wait.

Her forgiveness of past performances which have displeased her, and her alertness to preventing them in the future, spoil her pleasure in current efforts. For they are not challenges with which to grow and learn — they are potential abysses into which she may fall if she cannot meet her demands for continued excellence. "Look what happened before," she taunts herself, remembering the soufflé that refused to rise and sat in ignominious flatness before her guests. "What makes you think it might not happen again?" she asks herself, now unwilling to try another complex recipe from her favorite Julia Child cookbook. And yet, she continues to struggle, never once considering it is her expectations which she must reassess, not her failure to meet them.

It is not only with herself she is disappointed and unforgiving — it is with others as well. Those who do not have such exacting standards she discounts for the same reason she discounts her own efforts and abilities: They are not good enough. "If you hadn't waited until the last minute to begin your project," she counsels a friend, "you would not now be in such a state of panic." "If I have to

paint this room," she tells herself somewhat smugly, "I would have bought four cans of paint, not three."

She is constantly on the lookout for imperfection around her. The harried waiter who takes too long to serve her, or moves inefficiently about his tasks, and the fly which buzzes annoyingly near her table, disrupt her sense of propriety. As she sits impatiently waiting, she rewrites the script unfolding before her. In her script, the waiter sees it would be more efficient to wait on her before he clears the table next to hers. The fly would not be in the restaurant if she owned it. Nor would she be sitting before a table still greasy from a previous meal, which the perfectionist takes time to wipe and clean herself.

While most perfectionists are generalists in their pursuit of perfection and their desire for it in others, a perfectionist will often be a specialist, which increases her suffering, for her speciality is the area in which she herself is particularly unforgiving. A lover of words and their precise use is horrified when she discovers, upon a rereading of her own work, something she would now like to change. She develops an unconscious habit of mentally correcting the speech of others. Inwardly flinching when she hears the sentence: "It is time for my husband and I to buy a house," she automatically substitutes "me" for the offending "I." And when she comes across an error in a magazine or a newspaper, she will cut the article out, emend it as required, and send it to the offending author. If the error is egregious, she may well take the time to write a letter. It will take her an inordinate amount of time as her reply, of course, must be perfect. Such a perfectionist would not have been able to contain herself if she had heard the program that was interrupted by CBS to announce: "We have just heard that Dan Rather has been beat up."

The chaos engendered by her constant quest for perfection in herself and in others creates terrible emotional turmoil for the perfectionist. It drives her to seek solace in order, neatness and promptness, subjects about which she is rabid. She enjoys putting the contents of her shelves into rigid rows and the

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Lace

BY JOLIE C. LUCAS

If my life were a lace; intricate and fragile.
What patterns would become visible?
If each stitch were a choice made, a destiny sealed,
would my fabric stretch out pure?
Like the fingers of clouds viewed on a windy day, would my life be art?

If my life were a lace; strong and delicate.
Would there be places where the fibers are pulled taut
because of intolerance and doubt?

If my life were a lace; a lasting gift to you.
Would it be what you need to turn distant dream to reality?
Would my lace be flowered by milestones in our
relationship? A lace of courtship; woven from the heart
of the woman who loves you. A stitch worked by skillful
hands proves that passing time is our ally. A lace of
marriage; one pattern woven by the trust of two makers.
Tested by the seasons of life, it changes.

If my life were a lace; that covers our child as he
slumbers. Would my cloth prove tempered by an
obedient soul? Surrendering at last the pattern to the
hands of God? Trusting the creation to a workman much
greater than I?

If my life were a lace; that adorns my daughters on the day of
their unions, would it be just? Would the tracings of my life bring
forth a generosity and kindness evident to even the stranger?
Will my children, and their children, want to follow the paths I
have chosen?

If my life were a lace; that I cling to as I depart from this lifetime.
Would it be a fitting gift to my Lord? Will the snags deter from
the intent? Will the effort prove more lasting than the product?
Will He know that as I journeyed throughout my days, beside the
man I love, that each stitch was a breath. Each stitch was a
dream, longing to be brought to life.

Perfection, from page 11

contents of her closet into strict categories. It will take her but a moment to find the book you want to borrow, for her library is alphabetically arranged by author, subdivided by title, also alphabetized. She can tell you from across the room if a book is in the wrong place.

Unconsciously, she develops the habit of putting the possessions of others in such order as well. Her hawk-like vision spots a painting askew, which she will get up and politely straighten. Such a friend will also find that the perfectionist has aligned the magazines on her coffee table and tilted her lampshade back a fraction of an inch.

Promptness, another form of order she imposes upon herself, she also demands from others. For here is something measur-

able in its imperfection: She can determine precisely how imperfect it is and then find a scale by which to measure it. She will wait a precise number of minutes for a friend: Five minutes means he is late; 15 minutes means he is unforgiven; and, after 20, she will leave.

Because she is so severely judgmental of her abilities, accomplishments and achievements, she is suspicious of the praise of others, even when the praise comes from people whom she admires. "Did that poem really deserve an A, or does the A instead reflect a lower standard of grading?" she asks herself. "Does he really think my outfit stunning, or does he say that to everyone?" she taunts herself, spoiling the compliment.

Though suspicious of praise, she refuses to accept criticism. Her response to criticism is first to invalidate the source; failing that,

she will discount the criticism entirely. If her employer questions her judgment on a letter which she has composed for his signature, she will tell herself she has done it far better than he could have on his worst day. "Who is he to criticize me?" she asks herself, remembering all the times she has corrected his dictation. And should a professor take issue with her over a word choice, she will rush to the dictionary in the hope of vindicating herself. If she does, nothing further he tells her will have much merit. She must discount all criticism, for she does not believe that mistakes are merely chances to learn. To her, mistakes are a reflection of who she is, not what she has yet to learn.

What the perfectionist does not know, and what she may never discover, is that she is suffering because she is pursuing an abstraction — a state of flawless, unblem-

ished, faultless and complete excellence. She believes such a state is attainable, if only she works long enough and hard enough. It has not occurred to her to define precisely what she means by failure, except as something she must avoid at all costs. It has not occurred to her to define what she has truly asked of herself, and what she has also demanded of the world about her and those who people it. She has not asked herself if her expectations can be accomplished. Unless she does, she will stay on the same train, which she boarded a long time ago, anxiously looking out the window for a station that does not exist, except in her mind. She will pass station after station, sure that Perfection is the next one, and suffering more each time it is not.

